Foul Feathered
Review
№ 203

THE SPRING WOUND MAMMOTH
100
YEARS OLD
PANCAKE COALITION

Issue № 203: *The Searing Pan-Seared Sartre: A Populuxe Post-Positivist Exotropia.*

Fowl Feathered Review is a quarterly, a disordered artifact of the human impulse to categorize and consume the ephemeral. Produced by the Springwound Mammoth Pancake Coalition—an entity distinct from its waffle-centric counterpart—it is birthed under the Fowlpox Press imprint. Virgil Kay, its editor, presides over this enterprise from a paper canoe adrift on the Passagassawakeag, a river of dubious depth and even more dubious inhabitants. Surrounded by featherheads and their aquatic card games, Kay's reign is absolute, his word the final arbiter in the transformation of boastful souls into doormats. Layout and visual conceits are the province of Cookie Granola, while melodrama and histrionics fall under the purview of Childe Harold. Silent Bill, in his characteristically taciturn manner, provides necessary pauses. The review's structural integrity, or lack thereof, is the domain of Unkie Bob, whose talents extend to the mitigation of typographical errors and the prevention of electrical conflagrations. Everett Enótita serves as Kay's indispensable amanuensis, and the Ecum Secum Literary Brain Trust, in a gesture of dubious beneficence, offers nominal financial support. Printed upon the verdant expanse of Bald Porcupine Island, and laced with the enigmatic Kraa, a bioengineered culinary enigma, the Fowl Feathered Review remains a testament to human ingenuity, or perhaps merely a symptom of cultural decline. ISSN: 1929-7238.

"I am an observer of life, a non-participant who takes no sides. I am in the regimented society, but not of it."
--Moondog, The Viking of 6th Avenue

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Submissions

Fowlpox Press: A Submission Guide for the Determined (or Deluded) To the Aspiring Artist (or Sandwich Enthusiast):

1. **Craft** (or **Culinary Construct**): 2-227 poems, a numerical range that hints at both ambition and a troubling lack of self-editing, may find their way to our digital doorstep (fowlpoxpress@mail2poet.com). Alternatively, for the visually inclined, paintings numbered 2-953 (a prolific career, or perhaps a basement overflowing with forgotten canvases?) are welcome. We are also, inexplicably, open to submissions of twelve-inch sandwiches.
2. **The Gatekeeper:** Address your offerings to Virgil Kay, Editor. In posession of remarkably discerning taste, or so he believes, Virgil is a rooster of some renown, a creature of instinct and inexplicable confidence. His title, "China Wok Habitue," suggests a broader palate than one might expect from a bird, though it's more likely a testament to the local takeout joint's generous portions. (**Please note:** Include a bio, a desperate plea for recognition that will likely join the unread masses in the digital purgatory of our slush pile.)
3. **Format:** Poems, those valiant attempts at capturing the human experience in meter and rhyme, should be attached in a Word document or PDF. Paintings, windows into your soul (or a weekend spent with Bob Ross reruns), must be submitted in JPEG, TIFF, or a format our aging technology can comprehend. Jokes, if they exist, should be delivered in MP3 format. We are, alas, not equipped to handle the nuanced art of the live performance. Sandwiches, a curious offering in the realm of artistic expression, require clear plastic wrapping and a small packet of Kewpie Mayonnaise. (**Pro-tip:** The Kewpie packaging is, undeniably, a work of art in its own right, and we encourage you to admire it before consumption.)
4. **The Cycle Continues:** We exist in a perpetual state of acceptance and rejection. A Sisyphean task, some might say. We receive submissions 365 days a year, a testament to the relentless hope, or perhaps blissful ignorance, of aspiring artists. However, with a heavy heart (and a full crop), we must inform you that rejections also occur 365 days a year.
5. **The Sandwiches:** Ah, the sandwiches. These, unlike your artistic endeavors, find a permanent home within our editorial sanctum. Virgil, in his infinite wisdom, has determined that a diet rich in carbohydrates is essential for maintaining his regal demeanor.
6. **Leap Year Follies:** Leap years, those extra days gifted by the whims of the calendar, offer no reprieve. Aspiring poets, it seems, are undeterred by such temporal anomalies. You are, however, cordially invited to "take a flying leap" during these additional 24 hours.

Please proceed with caution. Artistic aspirations are a delicate dance, and the path to publication is littered with the fallen hopes of countless dreamers. But hey, maybe your sandwich is killer. Just remember, Kewpie or bust.

Fowl Feathered Review | Poets & Writers (pw.org)

"Non ignora mali, miseris succurrere disco."

— Virgil, The Aeneid

ROAR

BY HOSEA JOPLIN

In the shadowed crevices of a world that refuses to settle, Mrs. Haynes's body—no longer a vessel but an uncharted archipelago—delivers a creature that defies the very fabric of language, geometry, and moral expectation. It is not born but erupts, a rupture in the fabric of the familiar, an aberration woven from the threads of old nightmares and new impossibilities. The lion's roar, a sonic parasite, seeps into her womb through the ear canal, a virus of sound that grows into claws and manes, into the terrible absence of palate—an egg-sized void where a mouth should be, a portal to the dark telecommunications of the deformed.

The landscape shifts; Gersau hums with the quiet machinery of decay, 2,000 souls exhaling prayers to a dying century, their breaths a barely perceptible prayer to what cannot be contained. The hotel, a pulsating heart of mechanical certainty, breathes in and out, a silent witness to the unmaking. Here, the climate is a perverse sanctuary for monsters—figs and almonds thrive in winter's defiance, as if to mock the natural order, as if to suggest that even in the coldest rejection of normalcy, life persists in its grotesque, stubborn beauty.

In a garden of pneumatic illusions, Mrs. Haynes, thirty-three, mother of sixteen ghosts—each child a mere sketch of this final, ungraspable masterpiece—walks amid devices designed to dissolve her maternal architecture. Her belly, a universe beyond flesh, expands into a universe beyond comprehension, each cell a letter in an alphabet older than speech, older than thought, transmitting signals that only the deformed can

interpret. Her form, asymmetrical and unbalanced, refuses the tyranny of symmetry, rejecting the neat expectations of civilization with claws that grasp not for survival but for the prey of possibility itself.

Mademoiselle Caroline, seventeen and riddled with static, repeats her "hoo hoo"—an incantation of abandonment, a static chorus in the void. Her suffering, a series of attacks—each more unbalanced than the last—mirrors the arrival of the lion-child: unstructured, asymmetrical, a critique of proportion and expectation. Her refusal of nourishment, her body dissolving into an airy translucence, is an act of mathematical rebellion—hunger as a new algebra of survival, a refusal to be anchored in the predictable.

In the echoes of Russian ceremonies long past, the brutal choreography of correction—kiss the rod, thank her highness—becomes worthless against the voiding egg. No ritual can contain it; no punishment can reorder the chaos. The deformities—blindness, crookedness, deafness—become divine curricula, each imperfection a word in a language older than Latin, more precise than Greek. The lion-child, hearing frequencies no normal ear can perceive, smelling intentions before they manifest, carries the wisdom of the deformed—each deformity a portal to a realm of deeper understanding, a testament that beauty and honesty dwell together—hidden beneath threadbare coats, behind the masks of history.

The egg pulses with its own gravitational field, a dark star of possibilities. The asymmetrical foot kicks against the walls of her womb, a prisoner testing the limits of its cell. The world, a mirror cracked and rearranged, adjusts to this birth—this eruption—this liberation from the tyranny of form. Claws become tools of perception, not destruction; the missing bones, votes cast against the tyranny of normalcy.

Gersau, a place outside time, where the fig trees forget they are not Mediterranean, hosts the unending season of the unmaking. The hotel remains perpetually open, doors unclosing to whatever emerges from the darkness—an ongoing performance of chaos and

creation. The lion-child learns to navigate by its own internal compass, each step a limping dance toward horizons that recede, that mock the very notion of balance. Hair on the shoulders like a mane, a chest hollow as a cave, claws that grasp not objects but potential—these are the tools of a future that the symmetrical cannot comprehend.

Rich Haynes dissolves into static, his name a whisper lost in the hum of the universe's indifference. Yet his wife's delivery—this roar echoing through the Alps—becomes a seismic shift, a gravitational ripple in the fabric of reality. The voiding egg pulses with its own gravitational field, warping the mirrors of perception, adjusting the lenses through which civilization views itself.

Post and telegraph, church and clinic, all maintain their facades—civilized infrastructure trying to contain the uncontainable. But the lion-eyes see beyond, breathe through the voiding navel, tap out messages on asymmetrical feet—impossible geometries that defy the linearity of hope and expectation. The world's mirror cracks further, revealing a truth that is neither comforting nor comprehensible: the birth of the unformed, the unmade, the purest form of liberation—an unshackling from the tyranny of the normal.

And in this chaos, this glorious unmaking, the monstrous becomes divine, the deformity a sacred testament. The world, in its frantic attempt to impose order, merely presses closer to the chaos—an invitation to see with lion eyes, to listen with deformed ears, to walk with asymmetrical steps into a future that does not need the symmetry of the past to exist. The universe shudders, adjusts, and roars back—an echo of the voiding egg in the dark, pulsing with its own gravitational, incomprehensible truth.

ENTER
HERE
Atlanta
BELIZE
JAMAICA
HONDURAS

SLOWING *(Hour-Lines)*

By Issac Prentice

1.

Between the pages, between the hours
I am. Not a body, not a shadow–
but the breath that flickers at the edge of light,
a continuous line drawn through the silent gaps.
I have erased all pictures–
strange dots, links, fragments–
reducing life to a single, unbroken pulse:
food, the taste of existence,
a raw, clean incision into what remains.
I am between the pages
where time dissolves into shadows–
the cicadas calling for a mate,
their voices a static hum in the dark.
Always–I have been,
a whisper of spirit and truth,
a presence that does not need walls.

Do you see it?
There is no barrier, only a holy greeting–
a moment that never ends,
a gesture of endless becoming.
Make a donation.
Menu.
Sustainable stoves.
In Zambia, the forests whisper–
their breath heavy with the weight of reliance–
wood and charcoal, the ancient fuel of survival,
devouring the green earth,
one branch, one leaf, at a time.
Partnered with life, connected,
the green safaris breathe new life–
brick stoves rising from locally sourced soil,
small sticks falling naturally from the trees,
lessening the hunger of deforestation–
a slow, deliberate act of preservation.
Affordable, accessible,
the stoves are a promise–
not of fire, but of renewal.

Multiple units, collective warmth–
a dance of heat in the communal air.
No longer needing freshly cut firewood,
but nature's falling gifts–
branches, twigs–
a subtle revolution against decay.
And in these small flames,
a larger story unfolds–
a carbon footprint offset,
a quiet rebellion against the relentless march of destruction.
Larger models emerge–
cooking pots for families,
the shared feast, the collective memory–
a testament to resilience.
More stories in Malawi, Zambia,
projects of hope,
threads woven into the fabric of earth and sky.
Support us–support this silence,
these flames, this breath–
through donation, through presence,
from the foundation of green hope.

Thank you.

2.

And beyond this, the echoes of a legend–

Countess Elizabeth, the shadow in the stone,

her name whispered in the dark–

Ecsedi Báthory, a name carved into myth,

a mirror cracked, revealing depths of excess.

Born in the land of Hungary,

her story a tapestry of blood and silence–

accusation and myth,

a hunt woven into history's fabric.

She, the "Bloody Countess,"

a ghost in folklore–

bathed in the blood of virgins,

a legend spun from whispers and fear,

long after her body was still.

Was she a witch?

Or a victim of power,

a reflection of societal hunger–

for purity, for blame, for a scapegoat?

Her tale–

a mirror of desire and taboo–
a story told in legends,
fading into myth,
flickering in the dark corners of history.
Self-cannibalism,
the act of devouring oneself–
a metaphor, a madness–
a gesture of internal hunger,
the flesh and soul intertwined,
bitten, torn, reassembled.
Did she force her servants?
Or was it the collective hunger–
a sacrifice, a ritual–
an echo of Bataille's excess,
of desire that eats itself?

3.

In this tableau,
the grotesque and the sacred dance–
a collision of worlds,
the body and cosmos,
decay and rebirth–

all woven into the fabric of the universe.

So, see it–

the moment between the pages,

the shadow between the words,

the silent call of cicadas–

a never-ending gesture of becoming.

Support the unseen.

Support the fire–

the fragile breath of life,

the slow burn of hope.

Liminal B-Side

By Saul Moritz

91.B Cedar Street, Bangor, Maine. The address itself is a picaresque journey, a bastard addendum. Not 91, not 93, but a B-side, a splinter, a recalcitrant plebeian of a doorway tucked into an alley smelling of damp cats and the ghosts of last winter's road salt. The house is a vertical time slip, its temporal barrier fixed at 1963. The linoleum still holds the optimistic sheen of the Kennedy administration, though cracked now like a daguerreotype. The wiring hums a low, aggrieved tone, a single, held note of pre-Vietnam anxiety. The only violation of this stasis, the one vulgar intrusion of the 21st century, is the roof. In 2009, a crew of sullen men in pickup trucks, their schema for roofing including loud music and discarded energy drink cans, laid down a blanket of architectural shingles. From my third-floor window, they look like a scab of perfect, sterile geometry on the decaying flesh of the house.

I am the stationary picaresque. This is my single room, my encapsulated oscillation. I am K., a sculptor of mud. My bedside book is Lance Robson's *Varieties of the Picaresque*, a volume of which I possess the only copy, a phantom text I may have written myself in a fugue state. Robson's thesis infects my every observation. He argues that the outsider is the norm, the "inside" a precarious, miraculous fiction. By what miracle, he asks, do men establish an Establishment? By the miracle, I answer, of shared plumbing. The social contract of 91.B is written in the gurgle of its pipes, a fragile alliance against the tyranny of a full bladder.

My journey, my peripatetic flight and search, is the thirty-foot descent from my attic room to the second-floor bathroom. It is a passage through epochs. The attic is my primordial space, smelling of wet earth, turpentine, and ozone from the hot plate. Here, I practice a kind of dechronization. I work with clay, my hands plunging into the

Cretaceous period to pull out forms. I use ancient coiling techniques taught to me by a YouTube video of a woman in New Mexico and new 3D-printed armatures I design on a cracked laptop. The results are abstract figures, vaguely human, their limbs twisted in the silent agony or ecstasy of being. They are all outsiders. Prometheus bound by gravity. Oedipus with his eyes gouged out by a thumb-swipe. Orestes pursued by Furies of wet, clinging clay. They are my tribe, my silent chorus.

The journey begins. Down the narrow attic stairs, each tread a groan of protest. This is the cerebellum's domain, that reptilian brain of timing and movement Jeremy Schmahmann championed. My cerebellum, I imagine, contains massive connections not just to the frontal lobe but to the very wood of this house. It anticipates the seventh step, the one that dips like a seven-measure phrase in "Yesterday," a constant, tiny surprise that violates the schema of a functional staircase.

I arrive at the second-floor landing, the demilitarized zone. Here, the air changes. It is no longer the scent of earth and creation, but of chemicals and preservation. The cloying sweetness of permanent wave solution, the acrid bite of hairspray. This is the territory of the pensioners, Mrs. Elva and her sister, Dot. They are the twin managers in Satie's *Parade*, performing a constant, futile ballet to entice a non-existent crowd.

Their door is always ajar. I hear the murmur of the television, a game show host's frantic enthusiasm a counterpoint to the drone of a box fan. They are Napoleon's court in miniature; a regime built on a new social base of merit (Elva can still do a decent wash-and-set) and wealth (their combined pensions). They rule with an authoritarian style and a heavy overlay of imperial pomp: doilies on every surface, a stringent meritocracy of gossip. "Unity of leadership, strength, will, and direction: obedience, obedience, and ever more obedience," Napoleon insisted for the Opera. Here it is the law of the thermostat, the inviolable schedule for laundry, the silent procession to the mailbox.

The bathroom. A tableau of 1963. Pink tile, a toilet that flushes with the sound of a collapsing glacier, a medicine cabinet whose mirror is de-silvering into a map of some forgotten archipelago. The hot water tap performs a simple three-note figure, a G-C-B of metallic complaint, a variation on a theme of decay. Satie would have understood. He

would have seen the circularity, the music turning in on itself, symbolizing the futility of our efforts to ever be truly clean in this house.
Down on the first floor, in the former dining room, is the salon. *Elva's Coiffure.* A constitutional theater representing the glory of a forgotten French nation of beehive hairdos. Two domed hair dryers stand like decommissioned sentinels from a 1950s sci-fi film. On the wall, a framed photograph from August 19, 1989—the salon's 20th anniversary, a private echo of photography's official birthday—shows a younger Elva and Dot, their faces tight with the smiles of people posing for posterity. The whole room is a riot of American materialism and community feeling, a suffocating carnival covering the essential isolation of the individuals concerned. It is 7406 Franklin Avenue without the rock stars, a hotbed of Lipton tea and whispered diagnoses. Elva, a Didion in a smock, her observations delivered from behind the dark glasses of professional detachment. Dot, a Babitz who never got to burn, all her heat turned inward until it curdled into complaint.

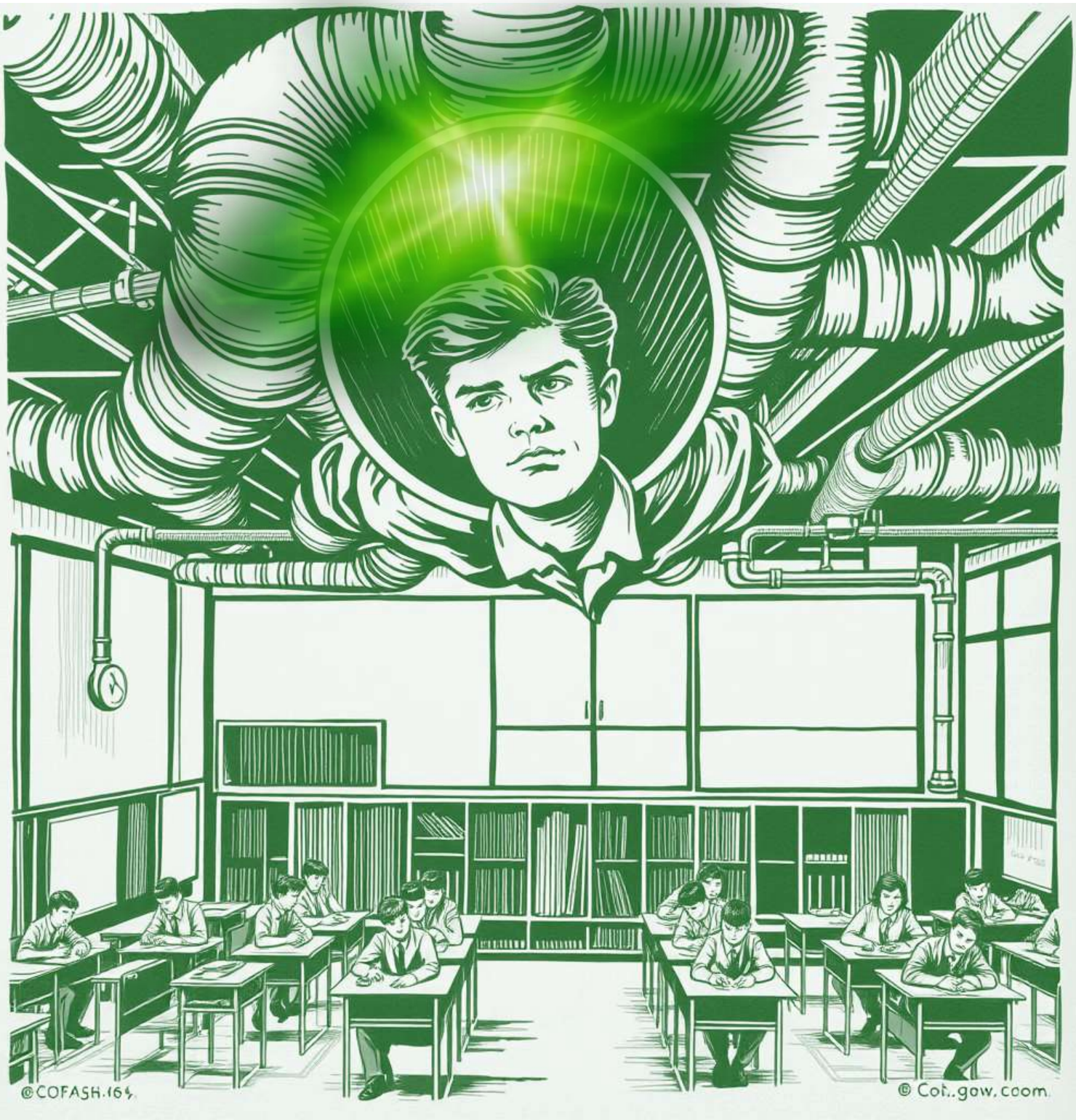
Back in my room, I sit with a lump of clay. The house groans. The neural firings of its ancient structure are its EEG, a readout of a slow, century-long dream. I am not a doer; I am a liver. I am Neil from *Goodbye Columbus,* an upstart-out lodged in the attic of a super-American family that has made good and is now making strange. The whole house is a bar mitzvah schema gone wrong. The cake is mouldering, the cigarettes of drunk uncle's have burned down to stumps, but the party hats remain perched at a jaunty, desperate angle.

I begin to work. My fingers find a rhythm, a vocabulary of pressure and release. It is a form of listening. The house is a vast musical instrument, and I am tracking its chord sequences over time. The rumble of the oil furnace in the basement, the skittering of mice in the walls, the distant whine of a siren on State Street. These are the notes. My brain, that magnificent prediction machine, anticipates the next sound, the flush of the toilet, the click of the salon's shears. It is a melody of a million tiny movements, a composition for decaying wood, aging flesh, and wet clay.

Robson writes of the Jewish diaspora, the ultimate picaresque. We are all a diaspora of three, exiled in this house. Elva and Dot from the security of their youth, me from

whatever constitutes the “inside” of contemporary life. We have, through some unspoken miracle, agreed to respect each other’s property and pay our income tax to the landlord. We have established an Establishment. A fragile, absurd one.

My sculpture takes form. It is not a person. It is a gesture, a question mark, a form that has made a great leap and is now waiting for the next note to fill the gap. It is an outsider. It will sit on my shelf with the others, a congregation of the alienated. Downstairs, the drone of the hair dryer starts up again, a steady C-sharp of Sisyphean effort. I look out the window, at the perfect, incongruous shingles, a crown of thorns on this house of holy fools. The world turns. The clay is cool in my hands. I am here. Moving, and not moving at all.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By Clive Sedgwick

Ivan Itch slept, not in the plush confines of some undergraduate dorm, but in the calcified lung of a building, a forgotten alcove of the Penn attic. His bed was a canvas of dust motes dancing in sunbeams, his pillow a pile of discarded schematics for a long-since-demolished lecture hall. He had entered the university not through an application, but by the will of a persistent, self-taught wind, a draft that snuck under doors and through grimy HVAC registers. He was, to the grand academic edifice, less a student and more a **sentient draft**, a whisper in the woodwork, a mote in the cosmic eye.

But wait–hadn't he once been a boy in a different attic, back in that crumbling house by the river, where the wind howled like a Pynchonesque conspiracy of ghosts? Oh, the memory floods in now, unbidden, like a madeleine dipped in dust: the way the drafts carried whispers of his mother's old radio plays, tales of men trapped in machines, their minds rewired by unseen forces.

"My mind may be a wombat," a voice echoes, "But that's better than a baboon in the bathroom."

Ivan mutters to himself, "All I can see right now is a baboon using the bidet." He shudders, a low, ragged sound, as if debating an invisible professor.

"I think, therefore I am," he whispers, but in the ducts, it's more like, "I leak, therefore I persist."

His education was a mosaic of snippets. He was a **flâneur of the ducts**, a nocturnal prowler of the university's metallic veins. By night, he slithered, a silent serpent of a man, through the labyrinthine ductwork. A fan here, a vent there, and a disembodied

voice would fill his chamber—a medical lecture on the **languages of psyche**, a disquisition on the mind's mysterious dominion over the body. "The mind can command the body to wither," the voice intones, fracturing into Ivan's thoughts like a bad signal on a forgotten frequency. He pauses, crouched in the shadows, and a Pynchon-like digression overtakes him: What if the whole university was just a vast, paranoid plot, a Rube Goldberg device engineered by long-dead deans to funnel knowledge into the unworthy, like him?

"A narrative trope," the literary scholar's voice cuts in, full of passion, "the mind/body split, not timeless, but a cultural construct, woven from the threads of history's loom." Ivan nods to the empty air, as if agreeing with a phantom seminar.

"Yes, but why a duct? Are they the true narrative, carrying the split like contraband through the walls?"

His mind, a **junk shop of esoteric knowledge**, began to teem with a furious, unarticulated purpose. He had no degree, no formal training. He had only the whispered philosophies of the vents and the tactile, empirical knowledge of the night. "I think with the help of small backhoes," he says aloud, his voice echoing oddly in the confined space, "therefore I am. Or am I just a draft, blowing through it all?"

He was, in his own mind, a sculptor of the self, a man who saw his being as a project, a work in progress. And then, as he emerged from his lair one night, hauling a rusted tool he'd scavenged—wait, no, not yet. First, the encounter: stepping into the dim corridor, Ivan nearly collided with a wide-eyed student, a shadowy figure clutching a stack of notes, probably cramming for some exam on cognitive dissonance. They blinked at each other, two strangers in the machine's bowels—one a ghost, the other a gear. No words, just that mutual stare, a silent acknowledgment of the absurd, before they stepped out of each other's way, Ivan melting back into the shadows like a draft slipping under a door.

It began with a backhoe. A small one, a rented machine, left unlocked for the night near a new construction site. Ivan, a man of uncanny skill and minimal conscience, had been watching it. It hummed in the evening air like a sleeping beast. He saw not a machine for

digging foundation trenches, but a giant, steel-limbed paintbrush, a tool for a **tableau vivant** of the soul. "The languages of psyche," a lecture fragment whispers in his ear as he climbs into the seat, "are electrochemical whispers, neurons firing like faulty wiring in a Pynchonesque novel." He grips the controls, and his mind digresses wildly: Remember that time in the ducts when the fan's hum evoked the grind of childhood toys, those plastic soldiers marching in endless loops, symbols of a body rebelling against the mind's commands? Oh, the Proustian rush—the scent of oil and earth mingling with the memory of rain-soaked streets, where he once hid from authorities, a boy already becoming a draft. "A recent cultural construct," the scholar's voice intrudes again, dissecting the mind/body split as if it were a plot device in some vast, satirical epic. Ivan laughs to himself, the backhoe's engine roaring in response, "But what if it's all a conspiracy? The ducts, the backhoes, the university—pieces of a machine that thinks it's alive, feeding us fragments to keep us guessing."

He worked in the small hours, a silhouette against the construction floodlights, the machine's engine a low, guttural murmur in the sleeping university. His project was a self-portrait, not in oil on canvas, but in the raw, brutal media of dirt, rock, and concrete. He was attempting to render the ineffable complexity of his being. The mind, his duct-fed brain told him, was not an ephemeral substance but a tangled web of connections.

"Wombat in the webinar," he mutters, digging into the earth, "grappling with its own contradictions." And the body was a glorious, flawed machine. He dug a perfect circle in the earth, a shallow crater, a symbol of the Platonic ideal, of the **perfection of pure form**. It was the **logos** of his thought, the rational core of his being. But into this pristine circle, he drove the backhoe's bucket again, creating a chaotic tangle of trenches, a labyrinth of crisscrossing lines. This was the **tangled web** of consciousness, the contradictions and complexities that drove him. He filled one of the trenches with small, sharp shards of brick and broken glass—the pain, the **grit in the oyster**, that produced the pearls of his thought. A pile of smooth, round river stones represented the settled, objective facts he had gleaned from his duct-dwelling—the theories of philosophers, the cold hard reality of anatomy. "Neurons firing," a medical voice echoes in his head, "a highly complex, but otherwise unmysterious electrochemical machine." Ivan pauses, the backhoe idling, and launches into a digression: What if the university's blueprints were themselves alive, a

Pynchonesque web of paranoia, where every vent was a spy and every lecture a coded message? "The mind's dominion," he whispers to the night, "or just another narrative trope, like the ones they teach in those echoing halls?"

The body was next. He used the backhoe to pile mounds of earth, one large, one small, with a narrow channel connecting them. This was his head and his body, the **great amphibian** of himself. The channel was the pineal gland, the place where the ghost in the machine resided, a metaphorical bridge of dirt and clay.

"The rush of blood through veins," the lecture snippet hisses like static, blending with the hydraulic lines' groan.

He then added a **visceral and sensory attack** to his creation. He doused the trenches with water from a fire hose, turning the dry, gray soil into a muddy, oozing swamp—a symbol of the murky, animalistic side of the human condition. And here, another Proustian flood: The mud's scent recalls a childhood rainstorm, when he hid in a drainage pipe, feeling the water's cold fingers probe his skin, a bodily rebellion against the mind's fragile throne.

"The grotesque sublime," Ivan says to the backhoe, as if confiding in an old friend, "ugliness and pain, yes, but what if it's all part of the plot? A university-wide farce, where ducts whisper secrets and backhoes dig graves for forgotten ideas?"

He scattered broken bottles and rusted pieces of rebar over the mounds of earth. This was his **grotesque sublime**, the ugliness and pain that was as much a part of his reality as his soaring intellectual pursuits.

His final touch was the **repetition with variation**. He had seen a single, broken lamp post near the attic window he used to access his lair. It flickered on and off, a sad, lonely star in the urban night.

"A flickering, incomplete existence," he murmurs, dragging a large, broken pipe and planting it in the center of his dirt tableau, its bent form a mirror of the broken lamp.

The pipe, like the lamp, was a **symbol of a flickering, incomplete existence**, a fragment of a whole. But here, in this context, surrounded by the symbolic remnants of a mind and body, it was more. It was a beacon. And as he steps back to admire it, another digression seizes him: What if the lamp post was a signal, part of a grand, Pynchonesque conspiracy linking the ducts to the stars, where philosophers' wombats and baboons debated in the ether?

"A masterpiece of debris," he concludes aloud, his voice fading into the night, "a self-portrait of a man who was, in the end, nothing but his own beautifully strange and contradictory parts, all held together by the roar of a small backhoe." Or was it? The ducts whisper one last lecture fragment: "The mind/body split, a trope we've taken for granted," and Ivan blinks, alone again in the shadows, the world a tangle of echoes.

THE CHALICE AND THE OIL CHANGE

By Moby Budala

The house was not so much a structure as a testament to the stubborn. Built from a kit ordered a century ago from a Sears catalog, it stood, a monument of prefabricated hope in a world of bespoke despair. Its foundation, a meticulously laid array of upcycled milk cartons and salvaged two-by-fours, was the handiwork of a half-dozen twenty-year-olds who, having reached a certain age and not yet found a profession, had instead committed themselves to a life of righteous theft and responsible re-creation. The lawn gnomes, once a kitschy battalion of consumerist cheer, had been solemnly repatriated to the woods, their pointed hats now silent witnesses to the fungal decomposition of privileged suburbia. In the yard, an ersatz doghouse, a miniature masterwork of salvaged barn wood and stained-glass shards, was a silent nod to a certain architect from a bygone era, its every line a study in defiance.

Inside, the light fell through the leaded-glass windows, a dusty, sanctified gold, illuminating the figure of Jane Doe, Ph.D. in Competitive Napping, with a focus on "snoozing your alarm clock." She was made of discarded vinyl records and old denim; her limbs articulated with carefully placed binder clips. She sat in a lounge chair reupholstered with fabric "acquired" from a yacht club's awning, holding a chalice. Not **The** Chalice, of course, but **a** chalice—a gaudy, silver-plated thing fashioned from a repurposed oil filter and a plastic goblet, a testament to her and her cohort's belief in the secular sacrament.

She held it with a kind of weary devotion, a look of profound concentration on her face as she struggled against a high-quality tension: should she work on her perennial plantings for the next few weeks or draft her book on sorbets or mount an effort around historic preservation in her neighborhood? This was the eternal struggle of the modern Renaissance person, a water bug skimming across the surface of a pond, a master of making the tension between desirable alternatives work for her. She had been taught that tension was not a force to be avoided, but a good energy, a catalyst. But lately, the tension had felt less like a catalyst and more like a wire being pulled taut, threatening to snap. She had not yet learned to thrive on the tension of her world.

From the kitchen, a voice—smarmy, in the way only an unrepentant ideologue could be—broke the silence. It was John Smith, C.P.A. (Certified Professional Awkward Silence), a construct of rusty wire hangers and burlap sacks. He was attempting to perform a full oil change on a 1992 Volkswagen Jetta, an act of subversion as much as it was a practical matter. The oil, responsibly sourced from a dumpster behind an auto repair shop, was a thick, black fluid that smelled of fossil fuels and moral compromise.

"The business opportunities and challenges offered by the problem of climate change would thus appear to be the same for all large oil companies," he declared, his voice echoing in the small room. He looked up from the engine, a dark smudge of grease on his cheek. "This implies that the climate strategies of each oil company should also be the same. As stated above, however, this is not the case."

He said this not to Jane but to the doghouse, a miniature, brutalist temple of reclaimed wood that stood by the door, its occupant an upcycled terrier made of dryer lint. The silence that followed was a masterstroke, more powerful than any applause or critique. It was a silence that forced his performance to exist in a vacuum, making his struggle intensely personal and isolated.

Jane looked from the chalice to her friend, the tension building in the room like a silent hum. The ambient sound of the house—the creak of the floorboards, the drip of a leaky faucet—was the only score, a minimalist dirge. She thought about the Antioch Chalice, with its pictures of a beardless, short-haired Christ—a version of Jesus that was contrary

to the one she knew. Her own version of Jesus was a collage of found images, his hair long and his beard a tangled mess of steel wool, his robes made from shredded plastic bags. She had read that the Antioch Chalice was likely not the Holy Grail, but was instead an early Christian tool for receiving the Eucharist. And that was the great paradox, wasn't it? The grand, mythical object of desire was, in reality, a simple, utilitarian cup.

"My friends all know I like interesting stuff," John Smith, P.S., Post-script, said, not looking up from his work. "They turn me on to new things all the time." He was a man with a keen sense of the value of time. He created sensationally successful businesses—a commercial real estate venture, a movie production company, an investment firm—by following his gut and his heart. He also enjoyed deep-sea photography of minuscule ocean creatures. This was precisely the kind of innovation and insight that could result from cross training your brain.

Jane stood up, her binder clips creaking. The chalice felt heavy in her hand. The air grew thick with the smell of old oil and unspoken resentments. "Smarmy is a useful word," she said, her voice surprisingly crisp, a transmission of the message that she valued her time and used it carefully. "As anyone who has had to listen to an oleaginous colleague drone on in a department meeting can attest."

She walked past him, a blur of discarded denim and vinyl records, and placed the chalice on a shelf next to a stack of vintage magazines. They were both prisoners of their own minds, living in a house of conscientiously stolen goods, their every action a form of social protest that nobody was paying attention to. The truth was that the chalice wasn't the Holy Grail. It was just a cup. The oil wasn't a sacrament. It was just a fluid. And they were just twenty-year-olds still living at home, their grand declarations about social change as flimsy as the plastic bags they used to make their messiahs.

She looked out the window at the repatriated lawn gnomes. They looked back from the edge of the woods, their silence profound. They were an unblinking audience, a force of complete, deadpan indifference. A single, tear-shaped dewdrop glistened on the tip of one of their hats. The tension was not going to break. It was just going to hold them all

together, suspended. It was their Alpha asset, in fact. That's natural selection at work. The forward progress of their lives, if there was any at all, was a slow, grinding oil change.

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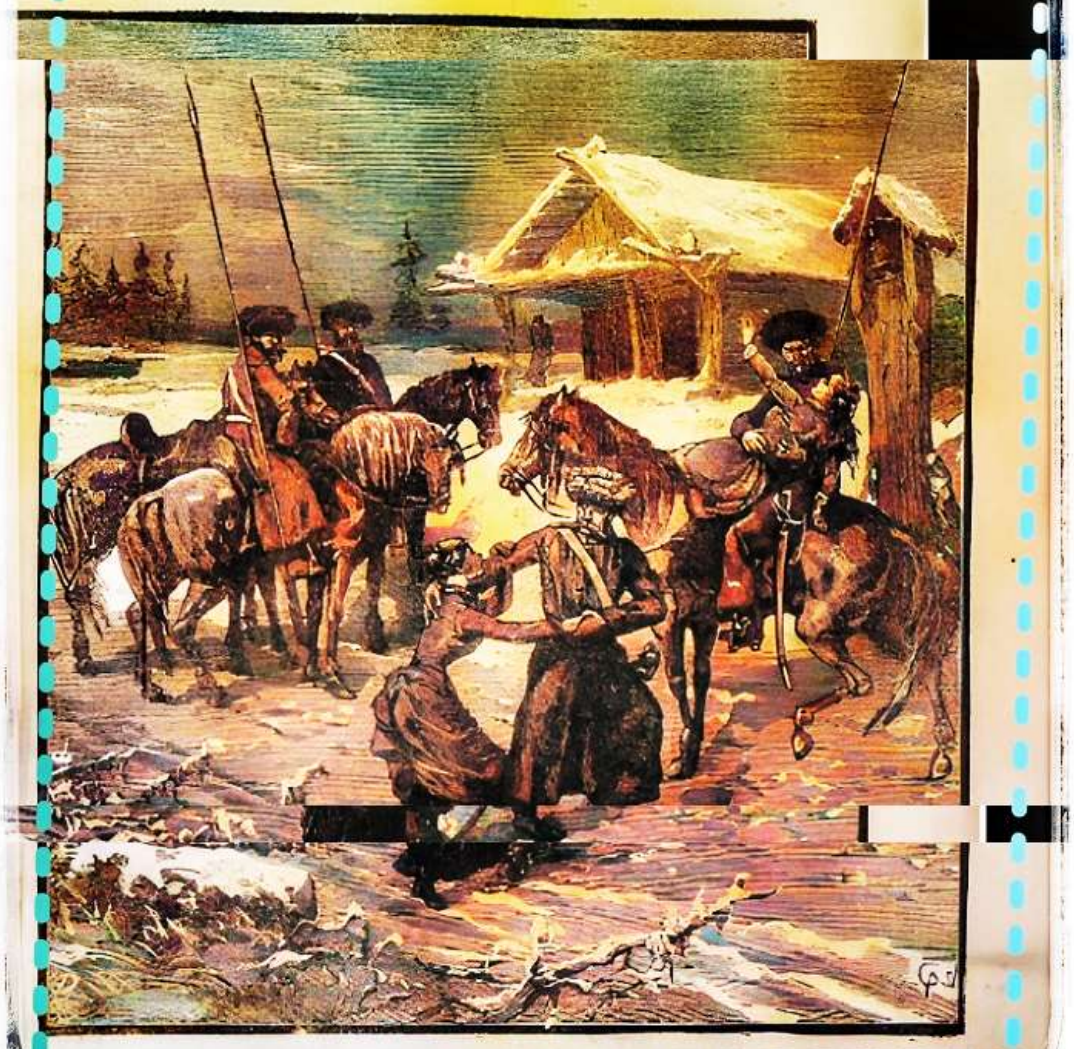
ZIARUL CĂLĂTORIILOR

AL INTÉMPLĂRILOR DE PE MARE ŞI USCAT

PREŢUL: ... Redacţia şi Administraţia: No. 11,—Strada Rovinari,—No. 11 ZIARUL CĂLĂTORIILOR apare o dată pe săptămână



Aventurile a două franceze în Rusia. — (Vezi explicaţia).

FRAGMENT

BY REUBEN P. SWAROVSKI

The ghost of the "I" drifts—flickering in the fractured alleyways of memory, like the Plastic Bag Man—plastic crown caught in the wind, a relic of the city's endless kaleidoscope. In Italy, where Giordano Bruno's whispers echo through the stones, the trembling hand seeks the broad exuberance of charcoal and graphite—lines trembling like protest, like the silent plea of Blandina, lost in the noise of famine, her weightless echo—twenty-five kilos gone, a ghost in her own body, a fragment of a broken mirror. The hand wills it, trembling, unknown, a fragment of history torn from the woodcut, a smear of ink, a whisper of human touch—yet the ghost persists, haunting the margins of the silent city, where the old and the new collide in a dance of shadow and light.

In the alleys, Vaselka feeds the wandering figure—feeding the ghost of the plastic crown—while the famine's ghost leaves a glitch in the fabric, a glitch that echoes in the hollow of my child's weight—ten point five kilograms—an unspoken hunger that no bread can fill, no voice can reach. Stephen, four, knows not the taste of fruit, only the silence of emptiness, the vacant stare of Polycarp, her bones whisper in the dark—famine's trace, a glitch, a flicker of uncertainty, a whisper caught in the kaleidoscope's shifting shards. The plastic crown drifts on the wind, a fragment of memory, a symbol of the endless drift—endless, restless, seeking warmth in the chaos.

Skip to the silent chorus of death—sixty-two thousand, lost in the labyrinth of the unspoken—the silent scream of 271 starving in the shadows, the famine's breath in the cracked streets where the Plastic Bag Man once drifted, a whisper of plastic in the wind. Theories of aging swirl—functionalist, conflict—each a fragment, a mirror, reflecting the ghostly faces of the old, the young, the drift—organized chaos, a dance of shadows, a whispered memory of a dance that never ends. The persistent tremor of the hand, the exuberant smear—an image born of freedom—no start, no end—just the drift, the moment,

the hunger—felt in Mary Dyer's work, in the weight of a child, in the flicker of a plastic crown lost in the wind.

The drawing exposes the aspect of the hand—seeking grace, seeking meaning—yet the hand is empty, a hollowed shell like the Plastic Bag Man in front of the church, silent in the cold, a ghost among the fragments, a relic of the city's fractured soul. The plastic crown drifts on the wind, a symbol of the endless drift, of the structural elements—changeability, temporariness, contradiction, irony—born from the desire not to be confined, but to transcend the fixed, the ideological, the geometric. The ghost of the "I" whispers through the layers—a flicker, a flickering ghost—an echo in the kaleidoscope, a flicker of the unspeakable, the unnameable.

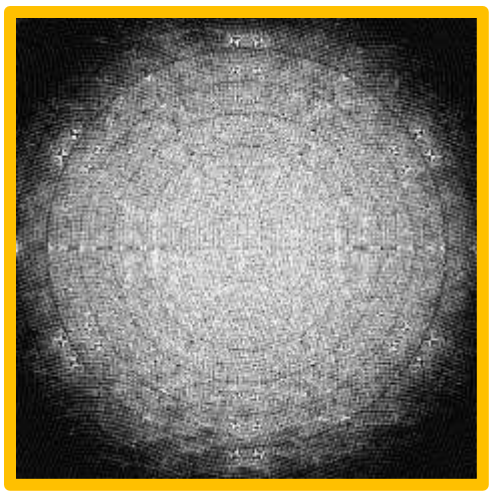
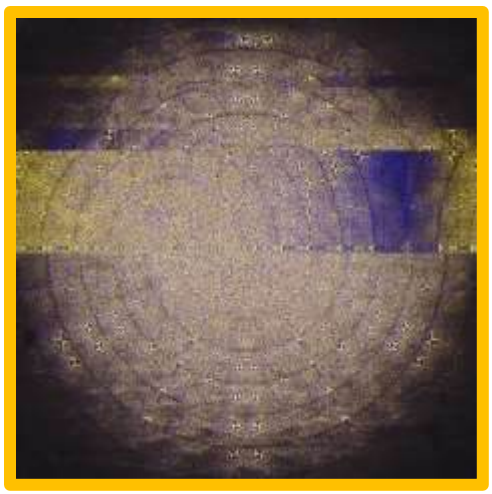
The famine is a glitch—famine is a trace, a flicker—like the slow, deliberate pulse of pneumonia, the inflammation of the delicate lung, the fragile tissue, the vital organ—destroyed by neglect, by the lack of prompt aid, by negligence, by the silent refusal to act. The pleura inflames—the serous membrane—covering the organs, a thin, spongy fabric torn by the destructive agitation of time and neglect—like the plastic crown worn by the wandering ghost, fragile and fleeting, susceptible to every wind, every blow. The lung's delicate structure, like the fragile human body, is subject to the same forces—irritation, agitation, destruction—every blow, every neglect, every delay—each an echo of the city's silent suffering.

The doctor's urgent plea—stifle the inflammation at its source—acts like a whisper of hope against the chaos, a flicker of intervention in the endless drift. As with pneumonia, the signs are swift—chills, fever, dull pain—an internal heat that burns beneath the surface, swelling and redness, a dry cough, then wet, expectoration—greenish, yellowish—sometimes blood—flickering in the shadows. The pulse—full or feeble—becomes the heartbeat of the city's fractured soul—each beat a reminder of the fragile balance, the delicate tissue—like the plastic crown floating in the wind—susceptible to every gust, every change.

The prognosis—an uncertain mirror—reflects the circumstances, the signs, the silent signs—whether resolution, suppuration, gangrene, or induration—each a fragment, a mirror, a reflection of the city's fractured body. The resolution—a flicker of hope—comes with the decline of symptoms, the cough easing, the sputum clearing—like the fleeting peace of a moment in the kaleidoscope. But suppuration, gangrene, the slow decay—these are the whispers of neglect, the signs of failure, the echo of the delayed response, the unspoken tragedy—like the plastic crown lost in the wind, forgotten, drifting.

The treatment—urgent, decisive—like the doctor's quick action—bloodletting, leeches, cauterization—each a fragment of hope, a flicker of salvation—an attempt to stem the tide of destruction—like the flickering light of a candle in the shadowed alley. The doctor's call—early intervention—mirroring the fragile balance of the city's fragile body—each moment pregnant with the potential for salvation or disaster.

In the layered chaos, the layers intertwine—famine, disease, art, and drift—each fragment echoing the other—mirroring the ancient debates of Hippocrates and Laennec, the modern shadows of neglect and the silent figures wandering through the city's fractured mirror. The Plastic Bag Man—silent, drifting, a relic—becomes a symbol—of the endless, restless drift—of the city's fragile, delicate pulse—each flicker—a heartbeat—each breath—a prayer—each image—a fragment of the unspoken.

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